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## THE "PREPAREDNESS" CAMPAIGN IS SUPERFICIAL

BY FREDERICK F. INGRAM,

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A preparedness that merely contents itself with appropriations, soldiers, ships and guns, and that is indifferent to fundamental economic conditions, is recklessly superficial.

Natural resources lie at the foundation of all preparedness, whether for peace or for war.

No plan for national defense can be effective without adequate public control of the raw materials of the nation. Without water-power for electricity, we cannot manufacture nitrates, the basis of gunpowder.

But one hundred and twenty public service corporations own and are holding undeveloped and out of use an amount of water-power equal to four fifths of all there is developed and in use by all the public service corporations in the whole United States.

The Shields Bill, now before the Senate, gives to the private power companies monopolistic control of far more water-power, including navigable streams, than all the power of every kind now in use in United States. Private corporations are authorized by this bill to seize upon any land, private or public, they choose.

The ownership and control by powerful private corporations, even in times of peace of our natural resources—the raw material of our industries—operates to divert the created wealth from its producers to these monopolists. In times of war it might threaten the very existence of our country.

This applies with equal force to coal, iron, zinc, oil, copper. Fundamental preparedness requires that our government resume ownership and control of these natural resources. Lives may be a vain sacrifice if the natural resources of the country are not available on the same terms.

### *Then Real "Preparedness" Would Take a Look at Agriculture*

Since it is vital that we set our house in order before hostilities, we believe the government should ascertain why agriculture languishes and why in spite of the many millions of federal and state

appropriations spent in its behalf, farms are being abandoned to such an extent that the richest agricultural state in the Union showed a decrease in its total population at the last decennial census, although there was a large increase in the population of its cities. The rural population in many states is dwindling and farm lands are being turned into grass or exhausted, are left barren. The price of farm products continues to soar to such an extent as to be a problem to the skilled city mechanic who, though receiving a greatly increased wage, finds it difficult to live thereon, forcing women and children into our factories in unprecedented numbers.

### *Then There Are the Slums*

The slums and the great mansions are increasingly abundant in our cities, while working men are forced to give up their former homes and take boarders or live in rooms. Meanwhile there are large areas in these cities unimproved or inadequately improved. That nation is best defended whose homes are best worth defending.

In preparedness activities there is a principle that is, or should be, axiomatic—it is, that the sacrifice involved should be equal.

### *Wealth Should Pay Its Share*

Our indirect federal taxes are unjust in their incident. In effect, they are income or poll taxes and, based on consumption, are mostly paid by the poor.

### *Sacrifices Too One-sided*

Only recently have we levied any federal taxes on wealth and even now get but one eleventh of our revenue from wealth. We hear much of Great Britain's unpreparedness in contrast with Germany when war began, but in that year (1914) Great Britain's tax collection from wealth was \$380,115,000. The United States on the same per capita ratio would collect about \$900,000,000 from wealth, instead of one fifteenth of that sum. In Germany the combined income tax on men of wealth often reaches 10 to 12 per cent.

Is it safe or reasonable preparedness to expect the poor who offer their lives to their country, also to pay the cost of war out of their already meager income? That tragic sacrifices be made by the many while a few are making colossal fortunes out of war contracts?

Fundamental preparedness will remedy such conditions, so dangerous to the country's welfare, be it at peace or war.

*Less Danger But More Fear*

Since the President, the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy were saying a year ago that we were fully prepared for any emergency, Europe, from whence could come our only danger, has lost at least \$10,000,000,000 of wealth in war and 5,000,000 soldiers.

Should not the President and Congress by investigation discover the source from which this clamor for war and preparedness for war comes? For all information open to the public seems only to confirm the statements made in an article written by T. Wells Brex, a noted British writer.

Mr. Brex says:

The war has altered the social face of Europe as much as the glacial epoch once altered its physical surface and has set back civilization one hundred years, crumpled Europe's social structure, stunned its arts and sciences, and withered away its web of travel intercourse for a century. . . . The warring nations will be taxed by war debts, while dreadful memories will keep a gulf between the civilized nations of Europe.

Twenty-five million men have taken up arms and nine million are already slain or permanently disabled. The total destruction of life will be twenty million. This is combatant waste alone. Nearly everywhere the birth rate has fallen and the death rate is rising. Paris is losing similarly, Berlin and Vienna much more heavily and, when the great war is over, Europe will realize that no plague in the middle ages ever ravaged it like this black death.

At the end of the war the population of Europe will not be much greater than it was before the Napoleonic wars. Confronting the weakened and diminished people will be such problems as three women to two men of marriageable age; more old men than young; more boys than workers physically in their prime; more physically unfit than fit. . . . high commercial freights, dear imports and handicapped exports, owing to the shortage of ships. Arts languish and humanities rust, while shattered Europe lies in a spiritual and intellectual stupor like that of the dark ages.